SNOWMOBILE PROGRAM
2002 – 2003 SEASON REPORT

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

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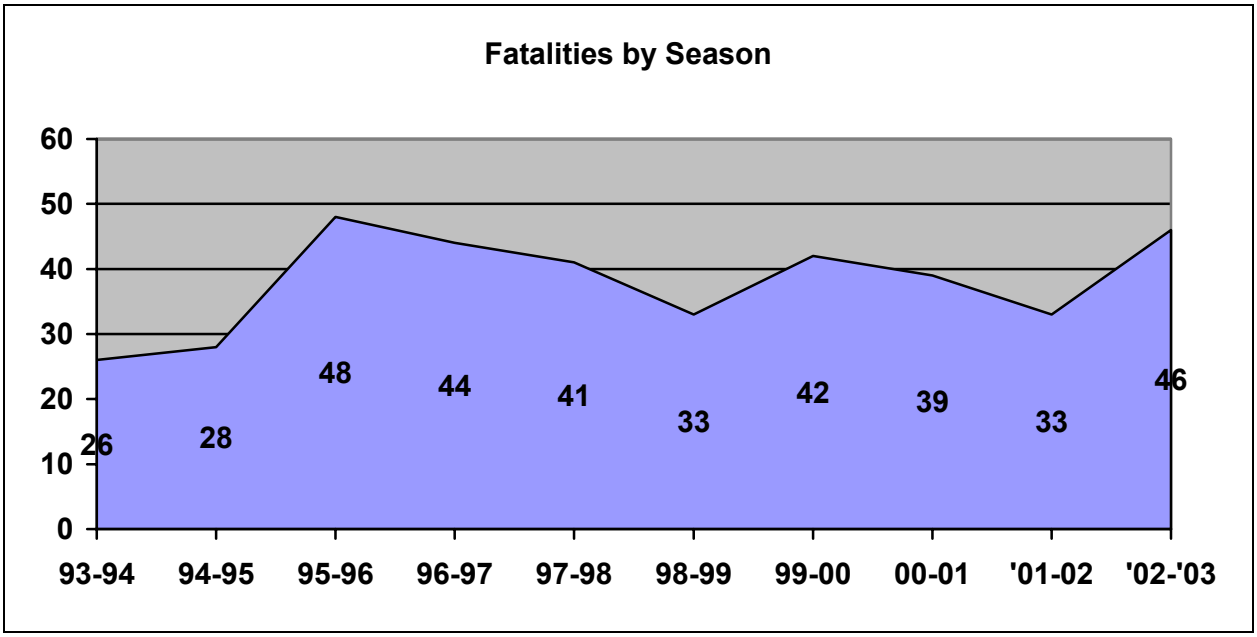
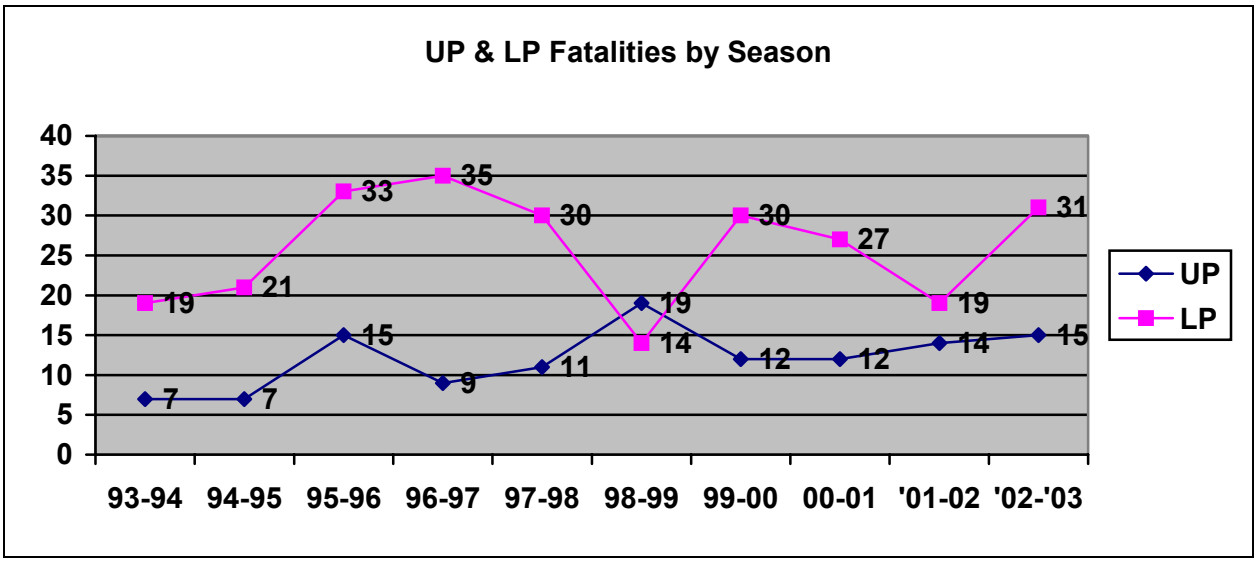
FATAL CRASHES—10-YEAR TRENDS

During the 2002-2003 snowmobile season there were forty-six fatal snowmobile crashes in Michigan with a total of forty six fatalities. This represents a 39% increase from the previous season's total of thirty-three fatalities. The total is second to the '95-'96 season for the highest number of fatalities.



Fifteen of the season's fatalities occurred in the Upper Peninsula—one more than the previous season, and the third highest total in the ten-year period. Fatalities in the Lower Peninsula increased to thirty-one from nineteen fatalities the previous season, and were third highest total in the ten-year period.



FATAL CRASHES—2002-2003 SEASON

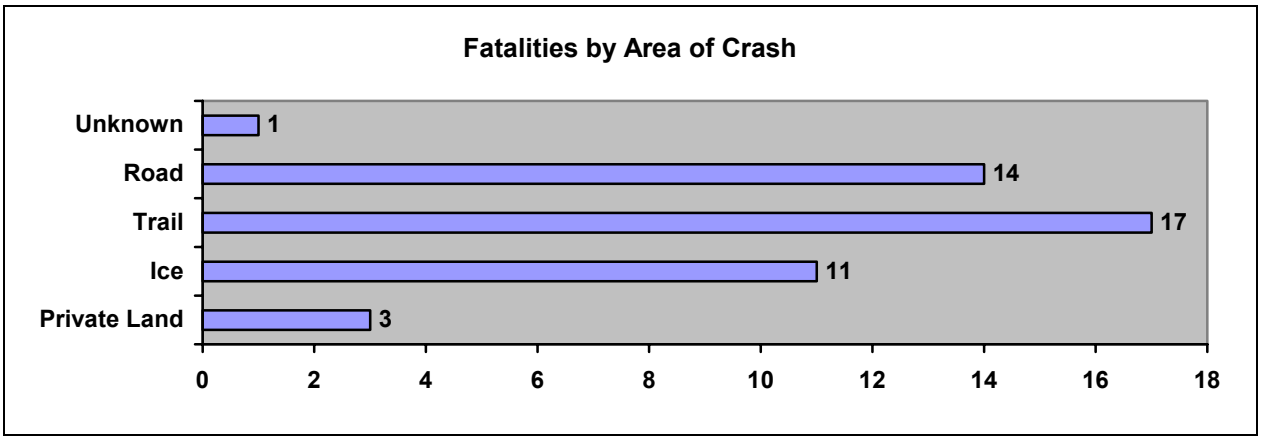
The areas where fatal crashes occurred are categorized according to whether the snowmobile was being operated on or along a road, on a state-sponsored trail, on the frozen surface of a lake or river, or on private land.

Fourteen, or 30%, of the season fatalities were road related. One fatality involved an air borne sled, which was "catching air", and went through the windshield of an oncoming passenger vehicle killing the driver of the car.

Seventeen of the fatalities, 36%, involved groomed snowmobile trails.

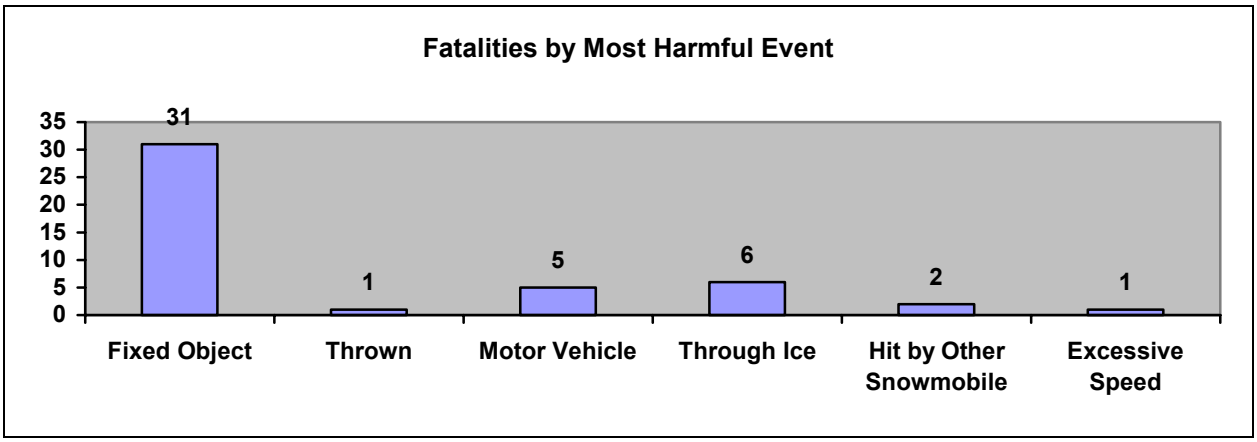
Eleven, or 24%, were on the frozen surface of lakes. Six of those crashes involved breaking through the ice.

Three were on private property.



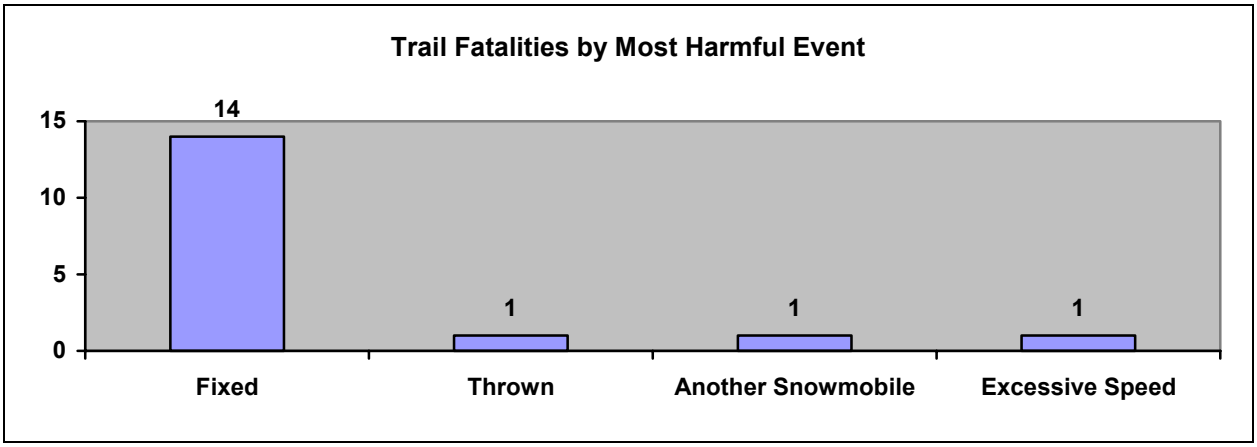
Most Harmful Event

From the "sequence of events" in each fatal crash, one event is designated as the "most harmful event" to the victim. For the season, the most harmful event for thirty-one of the crashes, 67%, was a collision with fixed object. In one crash the most harmful event was that the victim fell or was thrown from the snowmobile. In five crashes, 10%, it was a collision with motor vehicle. In six, 13%, the snowmobile broke through the ice on a lake. In two, 4%, it was a collision with another snowmobile. In one crash excessive speed was the most harmful event.



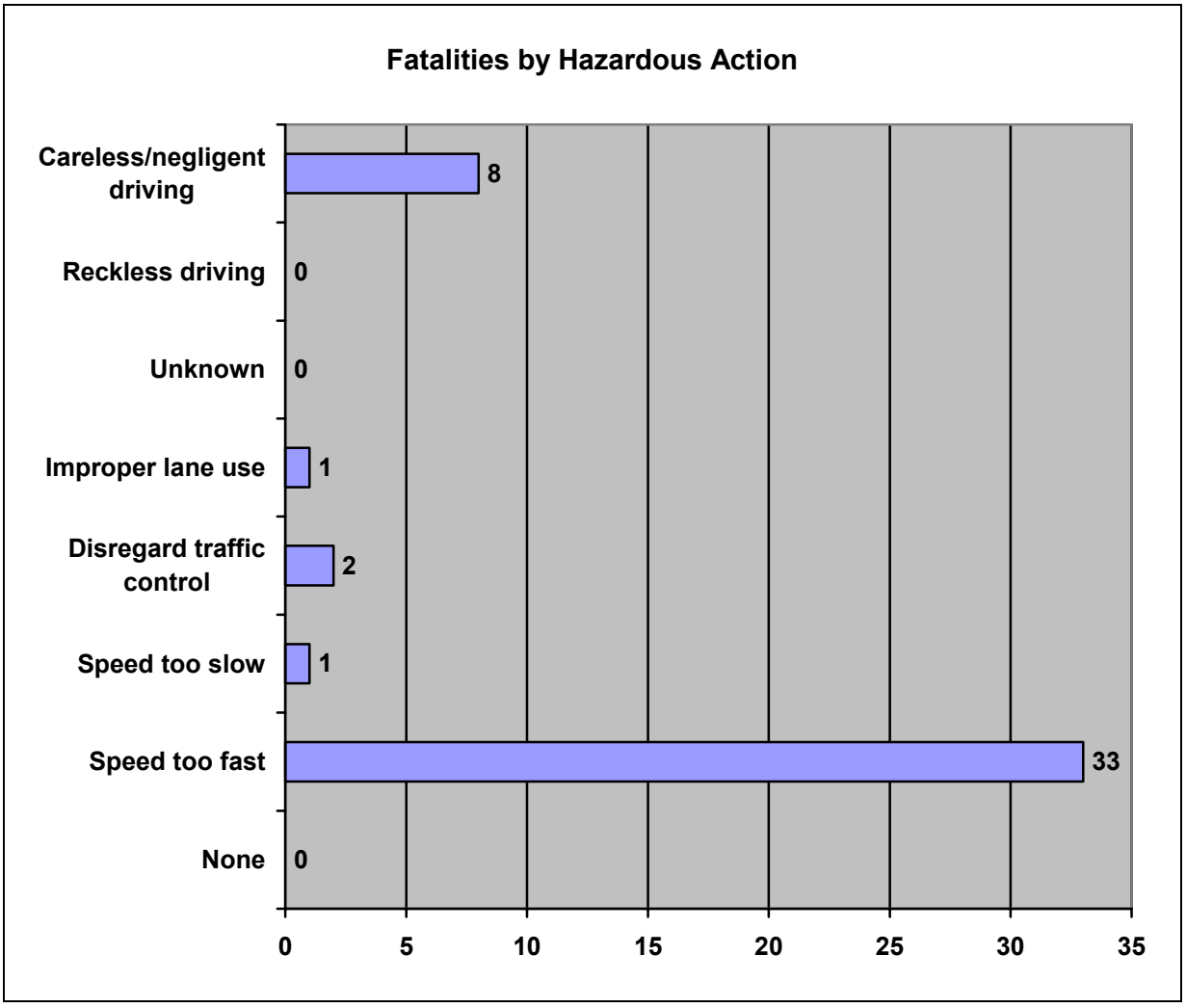
Most Harmful Event on Trails

Seventeen of the fatalities involved groomed snowmobile trails. For just the fatal crashes on trails, the most harmful event in fourteen of them was a collision with fixed object. In one crash, the victim fell or was thrown from the snowmobile. One crash was a collision with another snowmobile.



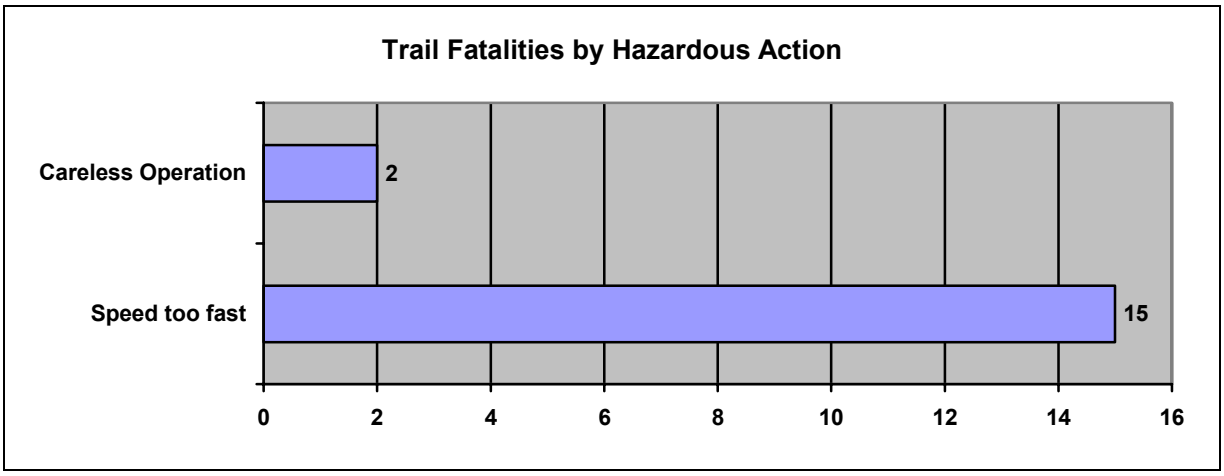
Hazardous Action

The “Hazardous action” coding on traffic crash reports reflects whether the person’s actions contributed to the crash. In the fatal crashes for the season, the most common hazardous action was “Speed too fast” in thirty-three, 72%, of the crashes. The hazardous action in eight crashes, 17%, was “Careless/negligent driving”.



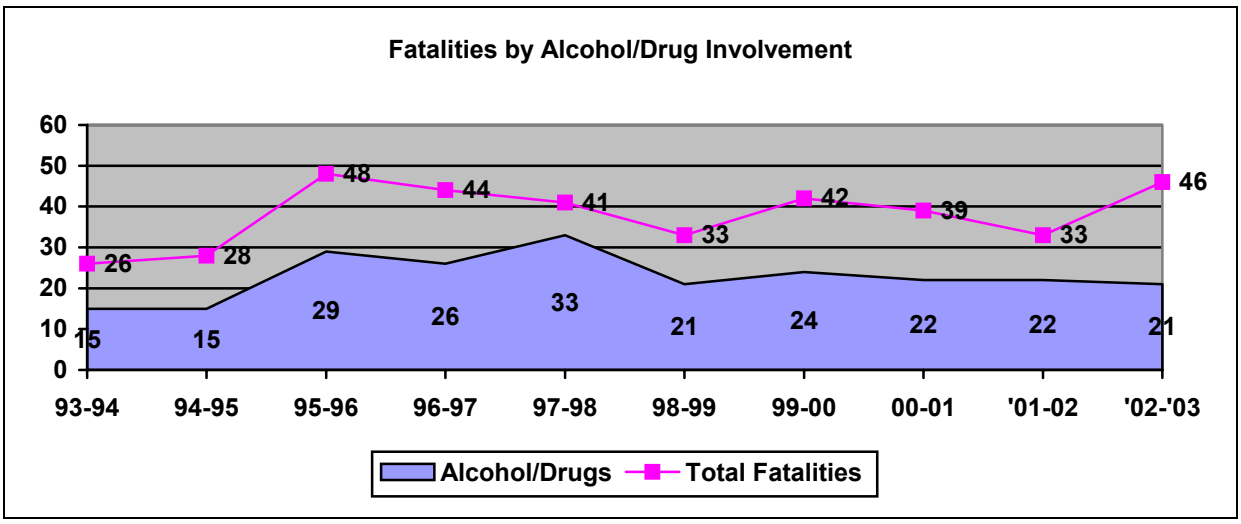
Hazardous Action on Trails

For just the fatal crashes that occurred on groomed trails, the hazardous action in fifteen of them, 88%, was “Speed too fast”. The hazardous action in two crashes was careless operation.



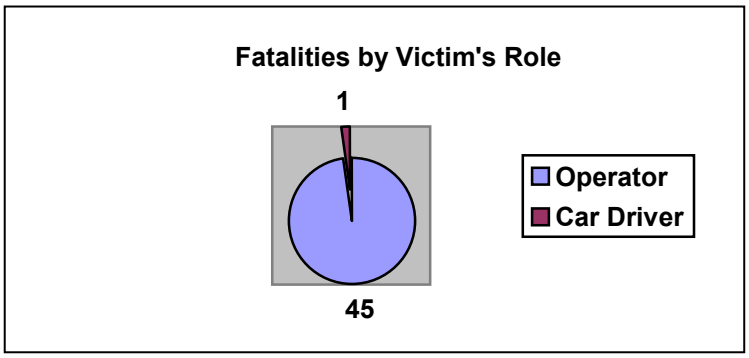
Alcohol/Drug Involvement

Alcohol and/or drugs were involved in twenty-one of the fatalities. For one fatal crash, both alcohol and drugs were involved. The number of fatalities with alcohol/drug involvement was down one from previous season, but the percentage of fatalities with alcohol/drug involvement decreased due to the total number of fatalities. The percentage of fatalities with alcohol/drug involvement decreased from 47% the previous season to 56%.



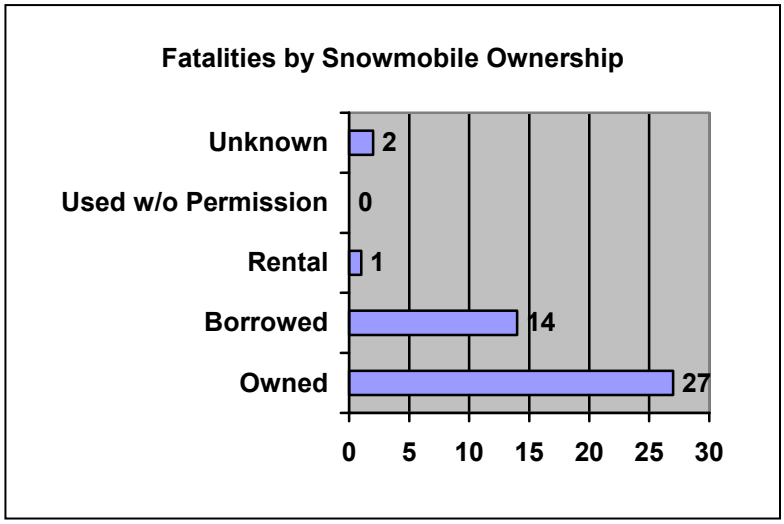
Victim's Role

Forty-five, 98%, of the fatal crash victims were the operator of a snowmobile at the time of the crash. One was the driver of a passenger vehicle that was hit by an airborne sled. All but the vehicle driver, were involved with snowmobile activities, although some were also associated with additional recreational activities.

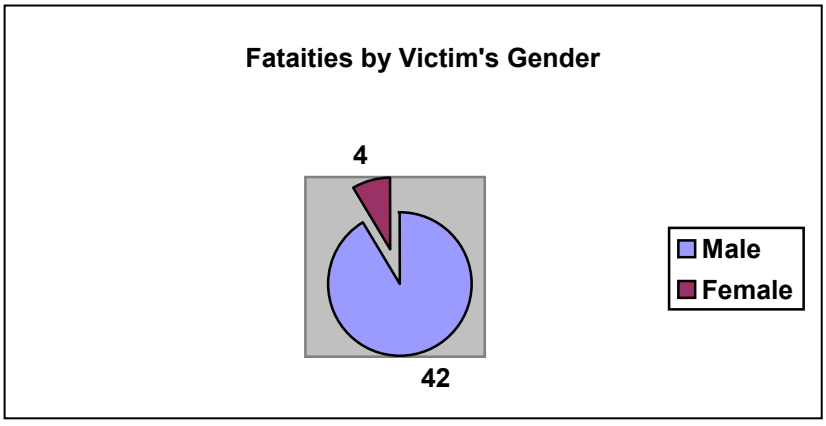


Snowmobile Ownership

The operators in twenty-seven fatal crashes were owners of the snowmobile, or in the immediate family of the owner. In fourteen crashes, the operator borrowed the snowmobile from a friend or family member. One operator rented the snowmobile. The ownership of two snowmobiles is unknown.



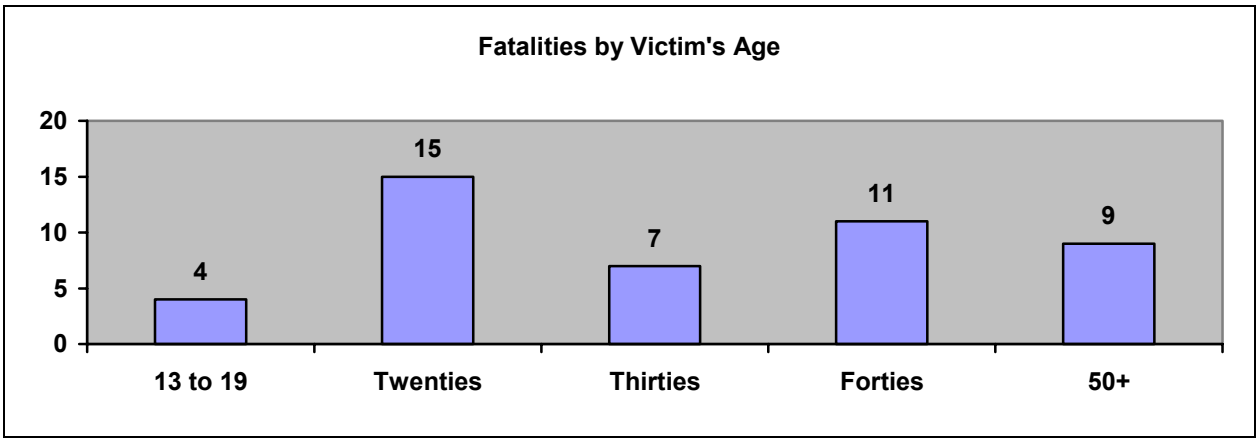
Gender



Forty-two of the fatal crash victims were male in gender, compared to thirty the previous season, although the percentage increased to 91% from 90%. Four of the victims were female in gender—one more female than in the previous season.

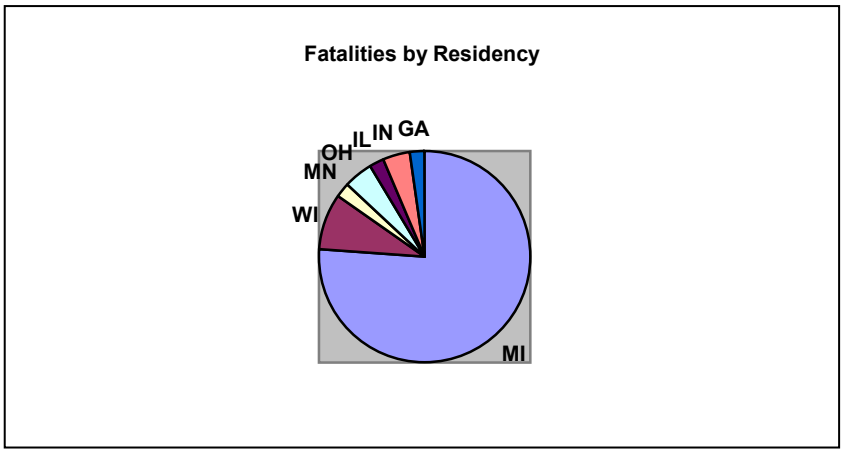
Age

The average age of the fatality victims for the season is thirty-four years old. Four, 8%, were in their teens. Fifteen, 33% were in their twenties. Seven, 15%, were in their thirties. Eleven, 24%, were in their forties. Nine, 19%, were 50 years of age or more. Thirty-three, 72%, of the fatalities were between 20 and 49 years of age, with fifty and older showing a rise to nine over the previous year of one.



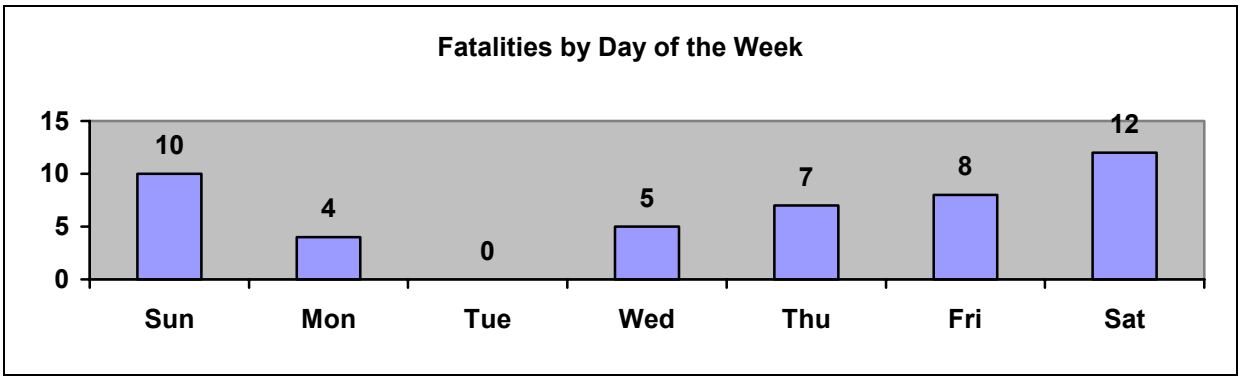
Residency

Thirty-five of the fatality victims were residents of Michigan. Four were Wisconsin residents. Ohio and Indiana each lost two residents. One victim from each state of Georgia, Illinois, and Minnesota,



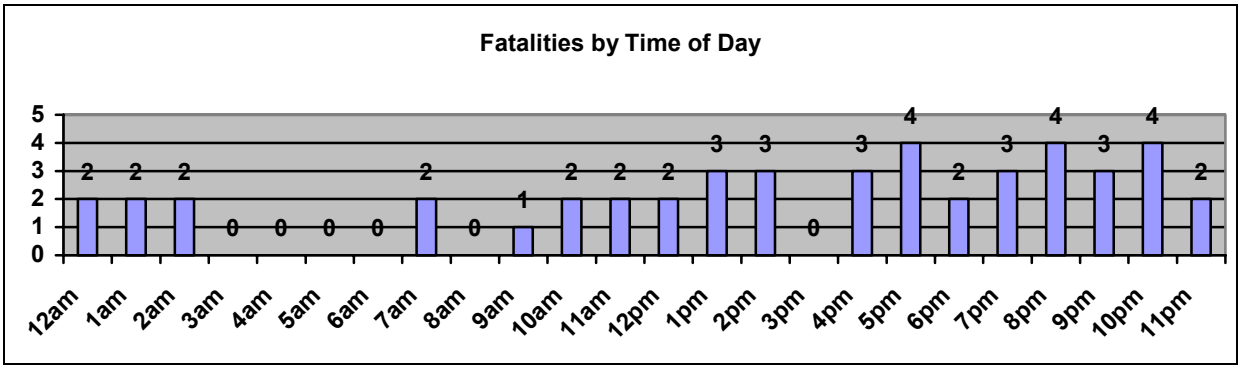
Day of Week

The day of the week with the most fatal crashes was Saturday, with twelve, or 26%, of the crashes. Combining the totals for Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays accounted for thirty, or 65%, of the fatal crashes.



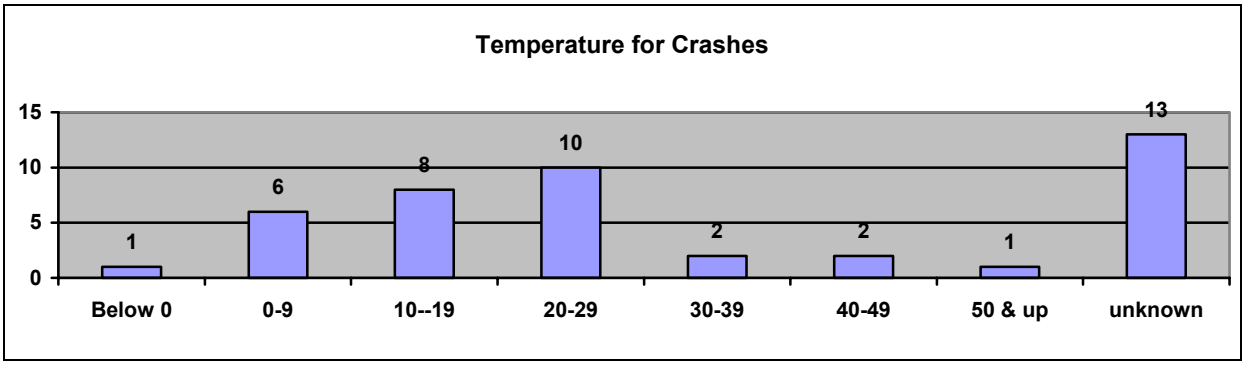
Time of Day

93% of all fatal crashes occurred between 11 AM and 3 AM, with one half between 4 PM through 11PM.



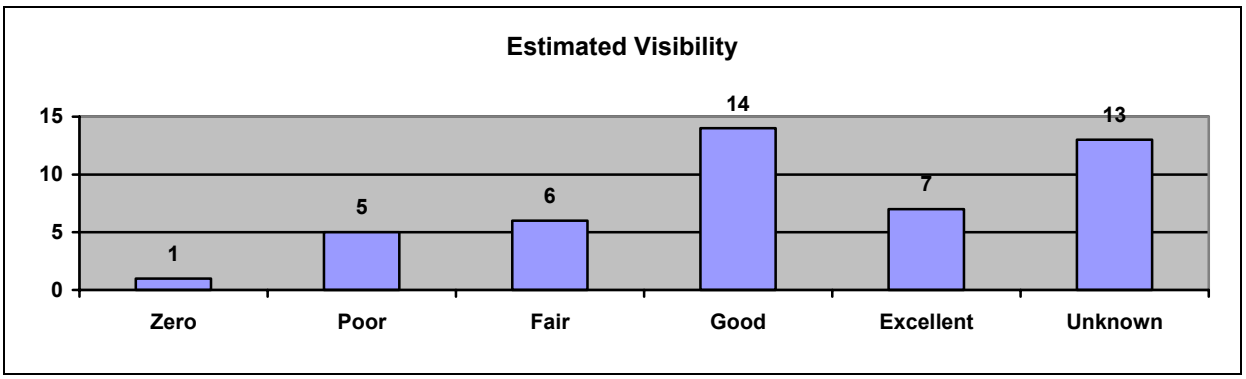
Temperature

The temperature at the time of the fatal crashes was below 0° F for one, 0° to 9° for six, 10° to 19° for eight, 20° to 29° for ten, 30° to 39° for two, and 40° to 49° for two crashes. The temperature is unknown for thirteen of the crashes.



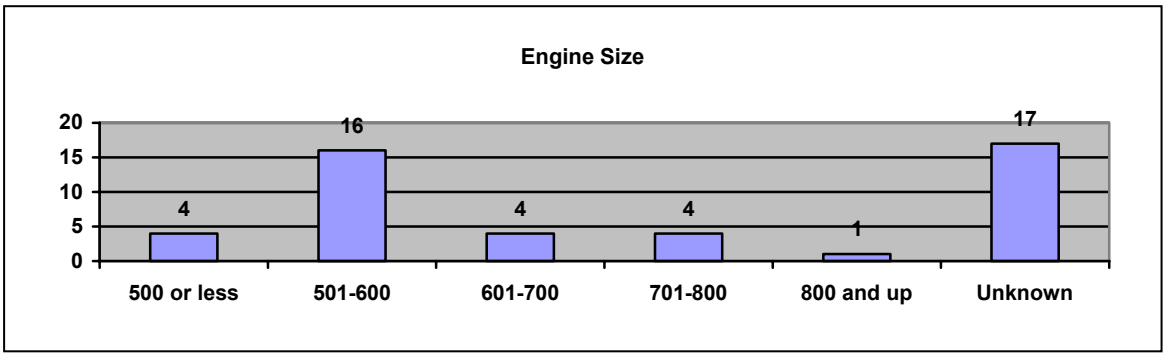
Visibility

The estimated visibility at the times of the fatal crashes was one with Zero visibility, five with Poor visibility, seven with Fair visibility, fourteen with Good visibility, and seven with Excellent visibility. The visibility is unknown for thirteen of the crashes.



Engine Size

The engine displacement for four snowmobiles of a fatality victim was less than 500 cubic centimeters (CC). Sixteen snowmobiles were between 501 CC to 600 CC displacement. Four snowmobiles were between 601 CC to 700 CC displacement. Four snowmobiles were between 701 CC to 800 CC displacement. One was over 800 CC displacement. The engine size in not known for seventeen of the snowmobiles.



District by Month

Law Enforcement Division of the DNR is administratively organized into ten Districts. The following table shows the numbers of snowmobile fatalities for the season for each District by the month of the fatal crashes. Forty-two of the forty-six fatalities occurred in January, February, and March.

During the month of December, there were three fatalities, which is 7.5% of the total for the season. Two occurred between Christmas and New Years Day.

January was the month with the highest number of fatalities. There were sixteen fatalities, which is 35% of season total.

During February there were 14 fatalities, which is 31% of the total. Five of those were in the Roscommon District.

March totals were 12 fatalities, pretty spread out across the state.

There was one fatality during April in the eastern end of the Upper Peninsula.

There were no fatalities during the season in the Plainwell District—this District lies in southwest lower Michigan.

FATALITIES BY DISTRICT & MONTH						
DISTRICT	DEC.	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	APR.	TOTAL
Crystal Falls			2	2		4
Newberry	2	3	3	2	1	11
Gaylord		2		1		3
Cadillac	1	5	2	2		10
Roscommon		4	4	2		10
Bay City			1			1
Grand Rapids		1	1			2
Livonia		1		1		2
Shiawassee			1	2		3
Plainwell						0
TOTAL	3	16	14	12	1	46

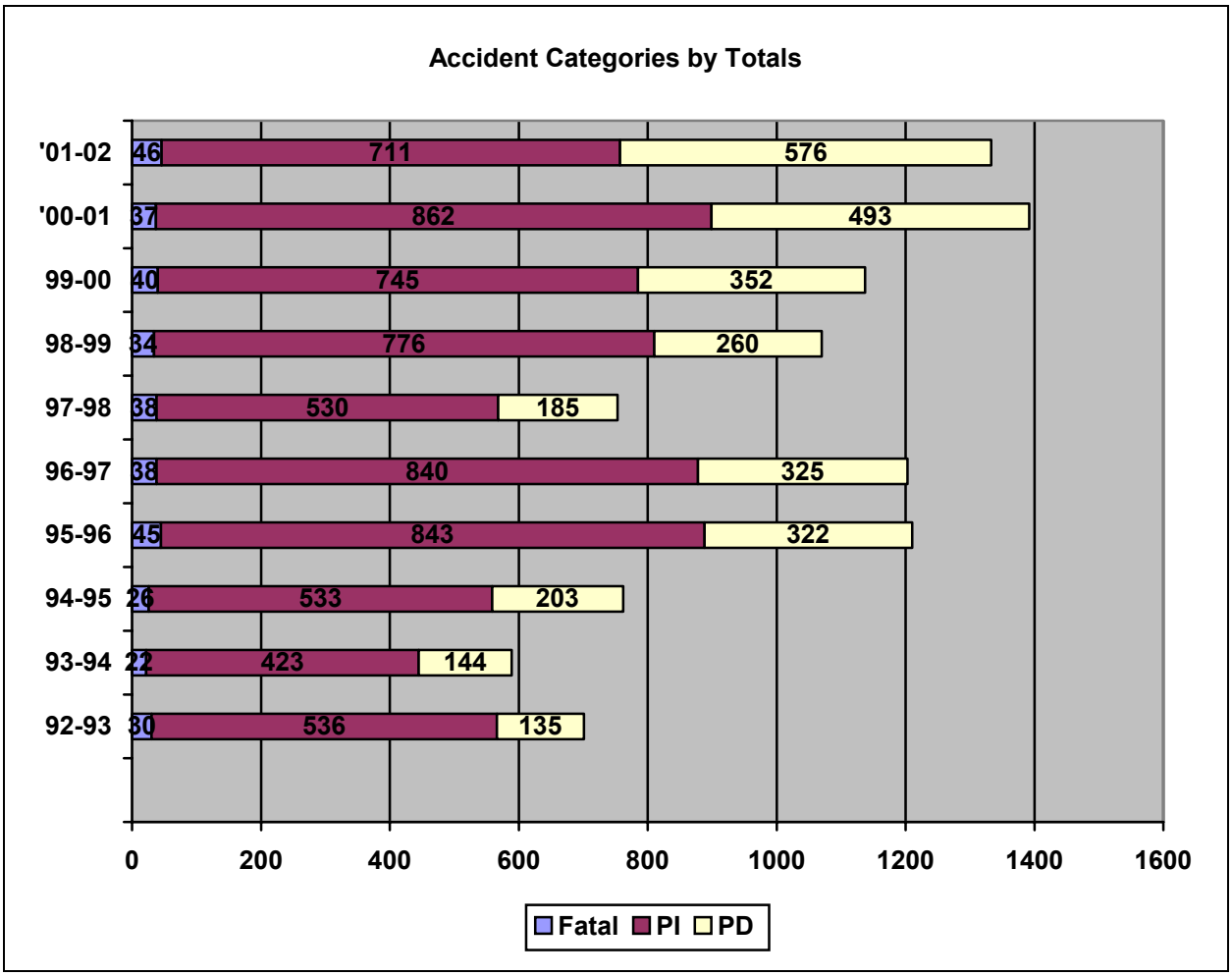
REPORTED ACCIDENTS

The latest available data on all reported accidents is for the 2001-2002 season. The accidents are in three categories: fatal, personal injury, and property damage. They are reported by number of accidents, as opposed to the total number of fatalities, injuries, or damages in the accidents.

The total number of accidents reported in the 2001-2002 season decreased to 1389 from 1,391 the previous season. This slight decrease breaks a three year trend of increases.

The number of personal injury accidents in the 2001-2002 season decreased to 711 from 862 the previous season, for a 17% decrease.

The number of property damage accidents in the 2001-2002 season increased to 576 from 493 the previous season. That was a 17% increase, and the forth consecutive season with an increase.



For the 2001-2002 season, fatal crashes were 3.3% of the total number of accidents. That was a increase from 2 ½ % in the 2000-2001 season.

Personal injury accidents were 51% of the total accidents for this season. That was a decrease from 62 % in the prior season.

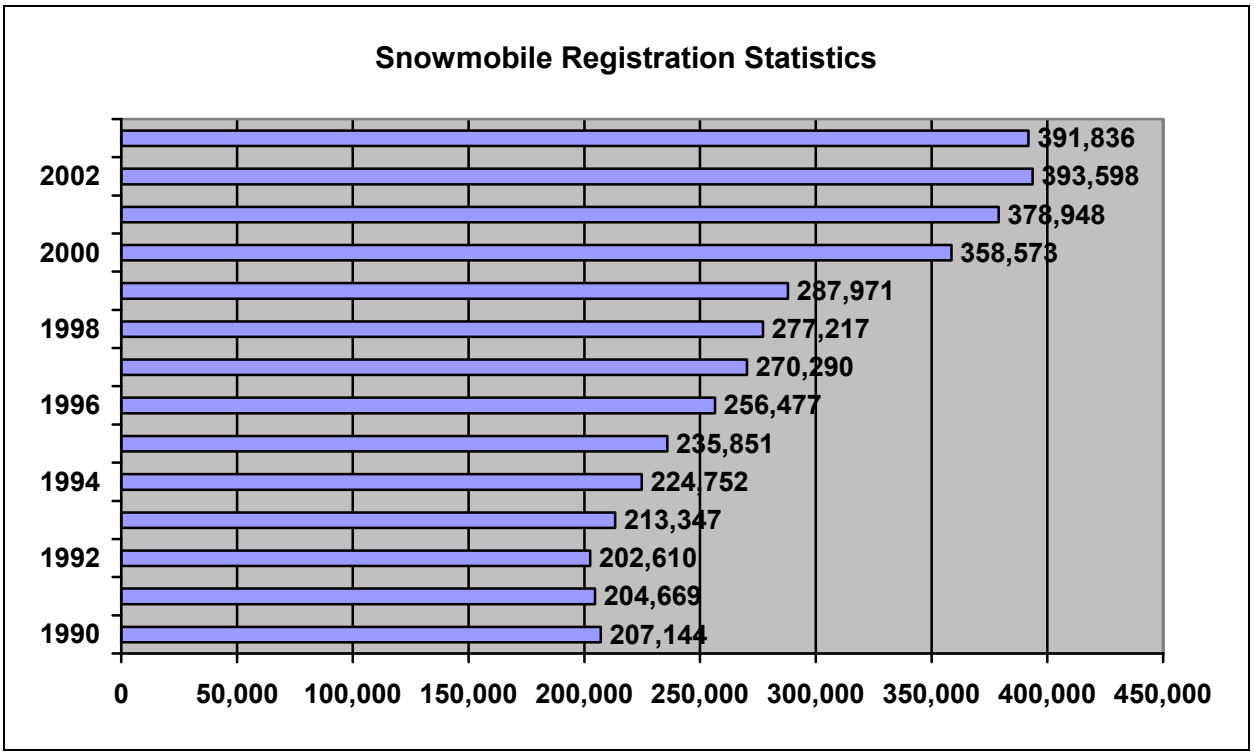
Property damage accidents were 41% of the total accidents in the 2000-01 season. That was an increase from 35% in the prior season.

SNOWMOBILE REGISTRATIONS

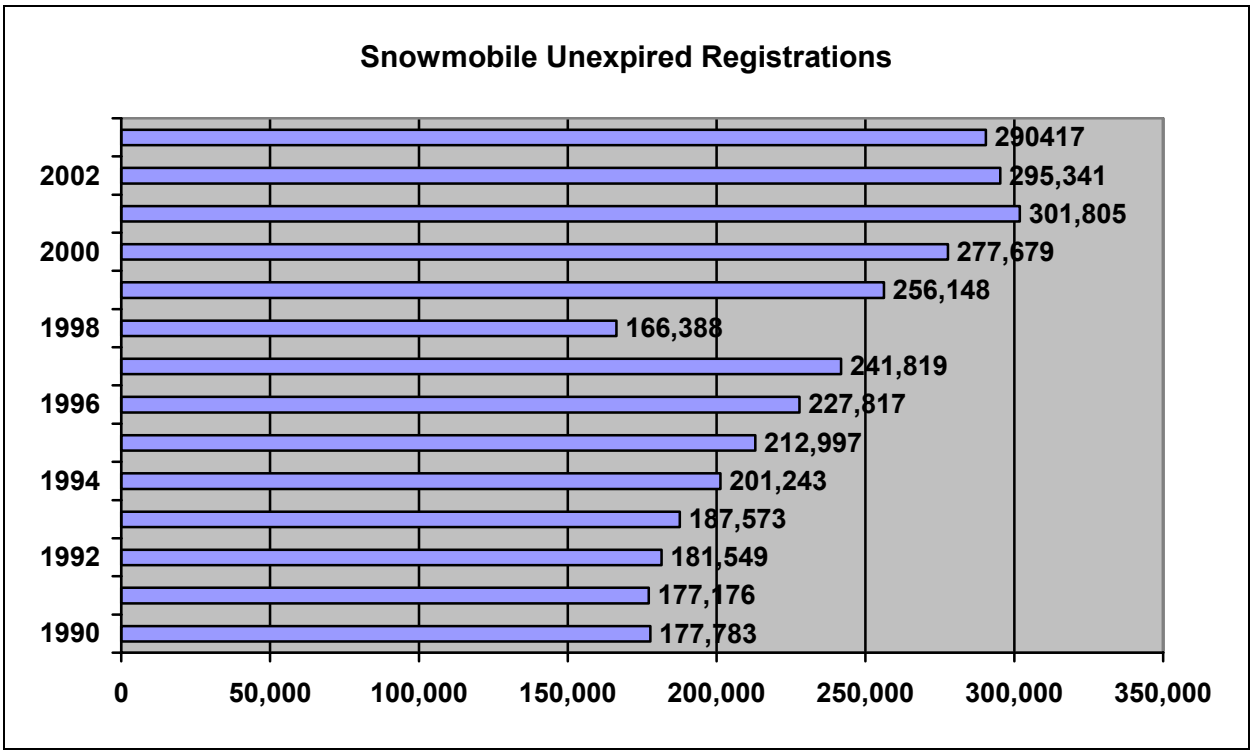
The Michigan Department of State (MDOS) compiles snowmobile registration statistics on a monthly basis. The reports from the months of May were selected as most representative for registrations in the respective seasons.

The reports show the number of registrations by year of expiration. In addition to valid registrations, the report includes the most recent year of expired registrations—but only for those snowmobiles that were not renewed or canceled, and if the snowmobiles were not reported to be junk, stolen, or abandoned.

The May 2003 MDOS report shows a total of 391,836 snowmobiles. That is a 1/2% decrease from the previous season, and the first year in ten with a decreased number of snowmobile registrations.



For comparison, the following chart includes only registrations that were not expired. These numbers may not be complete. The May 2003 MDOS report shows a total of 290,417 snowmobiles. That is a 2% decrease compared to unexpired registrations for the previous season, instead of the 1/2% decrease in the chart above.



98% of the snowmobiles registered in the State are registered to Michigan residents. The ten counties with the highest number of registered snowmobile are the same ten counties, with Ottawa dropping below St. Clair and Livingston. Each of these counties individually account for 2% or more of the total registrations.

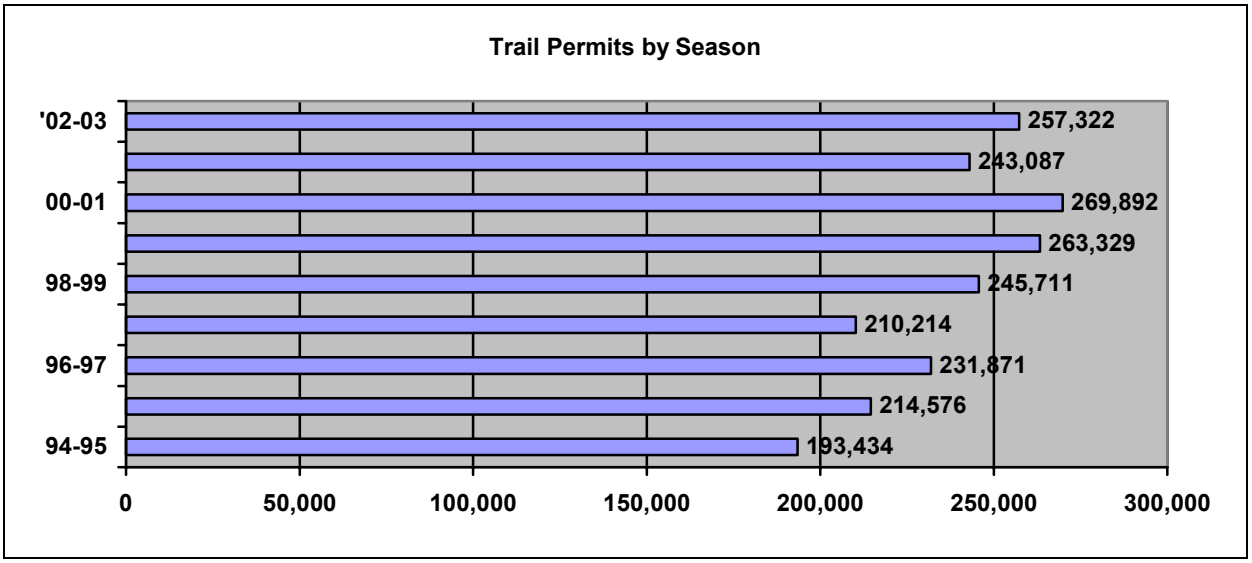
COUNTIES WITH HIGHEST SNOWMOBILE REGISTRATIONS		
COUNTY	REGISTRATIONS	% OF TOTAL
Oakland	32,101	8.19%
Macomb	24,111	6.15%
Wayne	21,998	5.61%
Genesee	17,574	4.48%
Kent	13,958	3.56%
Saginaw	10,224	2.6%
St. Clair	8,963	2.28%
Livingston	8,725	2.15%
Ottawa	8,599	2.22%
Bay	7,907	2.01%

The ten counties with the lowest number of registered snowmobiles are the same counties as for the previous season, with several slight changes.

COUNTIES WITH LOWEST SNOWMOBILE REGISTRATIONS		
COUNTY	REGISTRATIONS	% OF TOTAL
Ontonagon	1,567	0.39%
Branch	1,513	0.38%
Hillsdale	1,449	0.36%
St. Joseph	1,421	0.36%
Iron	1,414	0.36%
Alcona	1,266	0.32%
Oscoda	1,294	0.33%
Lake	1,259	0.32%
Baraga	1,027	0.26%
Keweenaw	247	0.06%

SNOWMOBILE TRAIL PERMITS

There were 257,322 trail permits sold for the season. This was an increase of 14,235 or 6%, compared to the previous season.



SNOWMOBILE SAFETY EDUCATION

Snowmobile safety certificates were issued to 6,417 students during fiscal year 2001-2002, which is a 5% increase from the previous fiscal year. It is the largest number of students trained in a year, and the first year with more than 6,000 students certified.